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HOW THE EXTENSION SERVICE AIDS FARMERS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

A radio talk by O. B. Martin, Director, Extension Service, Oklahoma A & M. College, broadcast in the Land Grant College radio program, National Farm and Home Hour, Wednesday, November 21, 1934, by 50 associate NBC radio stations.

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One-third of a century ago in the early springtime a seventy year old man came to Terrell, Texas, and asked the business men to indemnify a young farmer who would agree to carry on a crop demonstration. Walter Porter, a young farmer, volunteered. Once a month during that year Dr. Seaman Knapp made trips to Walter Porter's farm. The neighbors and the business men met him. On one of his visits he said, "What will the demonstration amount to unless the people see it and read about it?"

On the fourth of November 1903, Dr. Knapp's friend, James Wilson, Secretary of Agriculture of the United States, stood on that demonstration. He had funds available to fight the boll weevil. He set aside \$40,000 and authorized Dr. Knapp to appoint some agents to conduct similar demonstrations in forty or fifty counties. Ten years later Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act to establish similar activities in connection with the Land Grant Colleges of the whole country. During that period the demonstration idea spread to the boys and girls and the 4-H clubs began. The mothers helped the girls and the home demonstration work became the crowning feature.

Within less than ten years, more than twelve hundred agents had been appointed, and were at work. Three hundred and fifty were women. A system of adult education based upon self help and achievement was thus inaugurated. That was pioneering for the emergency and for the ages.

The founder of the work in the beginning gave these purposes "To develop the resources, to increase the harvests, to improve the landscapes, to brighten the homes and to flood the people with helpful knowledge about useful things." He also pointed to these objectives "To readjust agriculture, to reconstruct the country homes and to put country life upon a higher plane of profit, comfort, culture, influence and power." It seems that even in a time of depression we are still working on the first of each one of these conceptions namely: to develop the resources and to readjust agriculture. In Texas alone last year we had 703 agents and staff members, not including the extra clerical help of AAA. When we think of agriculture in the United States, we usually multiply Texas' figures by ten or twelve. I assume that we have six or seven thousand such workers in the United States now. This formula does not work in all lines. When we are talking about cotton, oil, gas, sulphur, wool, mohair and other resources, we use percentages running from twenty-five to ninety percent of the total. It was our observation and experience in the Agricultural Adjustment work to find that the demonstrators made the best committeemen. In fact, they formed public opinion for the whole enterprise. Before the depression struck, our men agents were establishing crop demonstrations on a million acres additional of terraced land per year. Our home demonstrators were putting up one hundred million cans of food at the same time. The Relief people asked the home demonstration agents to help establish and supervise twenty canning factories. Three million cans of meat were put up for depression relief and thirty million more after the drouth struck us.

But let it not be assumed that Texas or the South has a proportional share of the authority or the responsibility of the AAA, or indeed of the Administration of the Department of Agriculture. It seems to me that we are in the position of the Methodists. One of their leaders said: "There is the M. E. Church of God and the M. E. Church South of God." But every one will do his duty in the ranks even if the orders of the higher command are sometimes confusing. Perhaps we can get some seed and plants from the Iowa Nursery and then we can join in singing: "Ioway, Ioway, where the large plums grow."

The demonstrators are the moving forces also in agricultural organization. Individual achievement is the basis for collective action. When a dozen demonstrators in the same neighborhood are doing the same thing they are ready to come together for community activities. This is the foundation for the work centers which are being built in cooperation with F. E. R. A. We believe that if people come together to learn, to play, to worship, to judge, to fight and to eat that they will get great benefits by working together. This idea revives the best features of log rolling, house raising and corn husking parties. It also leads to the balancing of agriculture and industry.

Thus in periods of depression and of prosperity, the Extension Service of the Land Grant Colleges and of the U. S. Department of Agriculture are gradually developing a situation which Dr. Knapp described when he said: "Let it be the high privilege of this great and free people to establish a republic where rural pride is equal to civic pride, where men of the most refined taste and culture select the rural villa, and where the wealth that comes from the soil finds its greatest return in developing and perfecting that vast domain of nature which God has given to us as an everlasting estate."